United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/920
27 June 1991

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees tells correspondents of agreement with President of United States to delay withdrawal of United States troops from northern Iraq.

- United Nations inter-agency team to travel to Iraq to assess conditions and unmet requirements of civil population.

- World Food Programme begins airdrop of food to Sudanese fleeing Ethiopia.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata, told correspondents today at Headquarters that agreement had been reached with the President of the United States to delay withdrawal of U.S. troops from northern Iraq.

Mrs. Ogata said she had met yesterday with President George Bush in Washington, D.C., to discuss the situation of refugees in Iraq and the Horn of Africa. She said that according to the agreement the United States troops would remain in northern Iraq to guarantee security to the Kurds until the situation became less fragile.

The High Commissioner was scheduled to report later today to the Secretary-General on her meeting with President Bush.

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The United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) reported today that a United Nations inter-agency team would travel to Iraq on Saturday, 29 June, to assess the conditions and the unmet requirements of the civil population, including effectiveness of key productive sectors.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

The Agency said the United Nations team would be strengthened by the participation of independent experts and would finalize its report by mid-July. The mission was expected to provide an updated review of the general situation.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) started yesterday an airdrop of food to approximately 110,000 Sudanese who fled from refugee camps near Gambela in south-western Ethiopia and crossed into the area of Nasir in the Sudan. The onset of the rainy season has turned the area into a swamp, inaccessible by road and lacking airstrips where large airplanes can land. A total of 500 tons of food will be airdropped, enough to feed the returnees for about two weeks. Staff from WFP and other United Nations agencies are already stationed in the area of Nasir to prepare for the airdrop.

Permission for the airdrop was granted by the Sudanese Government after a high-level United Nations mission, led by WFP Executive Director, James Ingram, visited Khartoum on 14 and 15 June.

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CORRECTION: In Wednesday Highlights (Press Release DH/919) the third headline should read as follows:

- Secretary-General welcomes communique on Cambodian cease-fire adopted in Pattaya, Thailand, by parties to conflict.